

Message Text

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60

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-04 INR-05

LAB-01 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 AGR-05 SWF-01 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /077 W

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R 121130Z NOV 74

FM AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3130

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L CASABLANCA 984

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, MO

SUBJECT: UMT CAMPAIGNS AGAIN FOR HIGHER WAGES

1. SUMMARY: UMT, MOROCCO'S LARGEST LABOR UNION, HAS LAUNCHED ITS ANNUAL CAMPAIGN FOR WAGE HIKES AND OTHER BENEFITS. WHILE MOST STRIKES THUS FAR HAVE BEEN OF LIMITED SCOPE, A THREE-DAY LOCKOUT AT A LARGE SUGAR REFINERY IN CASABLANCA PUT OVER TWO THOUSAND WORKERS TEMPORARILY OUT OF WORK. NO PROTRACTED STRIKES IN KEY AREAS OF ECONOMY ARE ANTICIPATED BY UMT LEADERSHIP. FOR FIRST TIME IN RECENT YEARS SMALL ISTIQLAL UNION (UGTM) MAY BE CHALLENGING UMT IN SOME AREAS. BECAUSE CONSUMER PRICES DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE RISEN AS SHARPLY AS THEY DID IN THE FALL OF 1973, INFLATION SEEMS TO BE A SOMEWHAT LESS EMOTIONAL ISSUE THIS YEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. UNION MAROCAINE DU TRAVAIL (UMT) LAUNCHED ITS TRADITIONAL FALL STRIKE SEASON AFTER END-OF-RAMADAN HOLIDAYS MID-OCTOBER. .MEETING OF MEMBER UNIONS IN CASABLANCA ON OCTOBER 23 COORDINATED DRIVE, WHICH HAS AS MAIN THEME INFLATION AND DECLINE IN PURCHASING POWER OF WORKERS. PRINCIPAL GOALS OF MEMBER UNIONS SIMILAR TO
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LAST YEAR: STRAIGHT SALARY INCREASES, DOUBLING OF MINIMUM WAGE

TO 500 DIRHAM (ABOUT\$115) PER MONTH, INCREASES IN VARIOUS ALLOWANCES AND HOUSING LOANS.

3. THUS FAR MOST STRIKES HAVE BEEN OF SHORT DURATION OR HAVE INVOLVED LIMITED NUMBER OF WORKERS. EXCEPTIONS HAVE BEEN IN TEXTILE, PRINTING AND MOST NOTABLY SUGAR INDUSTRIES. IN UNRELATED DISPUTES, TWO MAJOR SUGAR REFINERIES IN CASABLANCA AND ONE IN BENI MALLAL WERE STRUCK LAST WEEK.THE IMPORTANT COSUMAR REFINERY IN CASABLANCA, EMPLOYING OVER TWO THOUSAND WORKERS, WAS CLOSED FOR THREE DAYS BY GOVERNOR DUE TO INDUSTRIAL SABOTAGE AND SOME VIOLENCE. NEXT MAJOR TARGET WILL BE CASABLANCA CITY BUS LINE.

4. UMT LEADERSHIP DOES NOT EXPECT ANY SERIOUS PROTRACTED STRIKES TO EMERGE FROM CURRENT CAMPAIGN. UNION LEADERS ARE ALL TOO WELL AWARE THAT GOM WILL NOT TOLERATE LENGTHY STRIKES THAT WOULD SEVERELY THREATEN MOROCCAN ECONOMY, AND VITAL PHOSPHATE MINING AND RAILROAD SECTORS ARE QUIESCENT.

5. THERE ARE SCATTERED EARLY INDICATIONS THAT UNION GENERAL

DES TRAVAILLEURS MORACAINS (UGTM), RELATIVELY SMALL ISTIQLAL LABOR FEDERATION, MAY BE POSING SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO UMT IN SOME AREAS. VEILED REFERENCES TO "PUPPET UNION" IN UMT PRESS, UMT-UGTM SCUFFLES AT COSUMAR REFINERY, DISPUTES OVER WORKER DELEGATES AND A FEW FRANK PRIVATE COMMENTS BY UMT OFFICIALS MAY INDICATE PERCEPTABLE SHIFT IN WORKER LOYALTIES. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SPOT A TREND AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, AND UMT REMAINS FAR AND AWAY DOMINANT LABOR FORCE IN MOROCCO.

6. COMMENT: VIEWED FROM CASABLANCA, INFLATION(WHILE STILL AN IMPORTANT INTERNAL ISSUE) IS NOT THE EMOTIONAL ISSUE IT WAS IMMEDIATELY AFTER SHARP POST-RAMADAN PRICE INCREASES IN 1973. WHILE THE CASABLANCA CONSUMER PRICE INDEX IS AT ITS HIGHEST LEVEL EVER, AUTHORITIES SEEM TO HAVE DON A BETTER JOB AT KEEPING PRICE INCREASES IN CHECK THIS YEAR THAN LAST. THE RESULT IS A SOMEWHAT LESS INCENDIARY LABOR CLIMATE. END COMMENT.
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